

# *Fire Warden*

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First and foremost I would like to thank Pat Frank, Linda Strickland and new Fire Warden Jim Gordon at the Recycling Center for all they do; the Town of Harpswell is fortunate to have them.

2005 proved to be a busy year for open burning, with just under 1100 permits being issued by the Town Fire Wardens. This isn't the most we've issued in a year, but if you remember back to the spring and summer, we had several weeks when no permits could be issued. This year a new process was started by the State of Maine that allows permits to be issued online. There are several rules that must be followed: You must burn after 5:00 p.m., print the permit and have it in your possession, and pay a \$7.00 fee. Nineteen (19) permits were issued this way in 2005.



*Frank True, Fire Warden*

Open burning is not allowed in the Town of Harpswell without a permit issued by one of the Town Fire Wardens or by the State of Maine as described above. The permit from the Town must be issued on the same day you plan to burn. Please stop by the Town Office and see Pat Frank during normal business hours M-F or Jim Gordon at the Recycling Center on Saturdays to obtain a permit. Fire Wardens: Frank True, Dick Wyer, Donna Wyer, Lisa True and Greg Tisdale can issue permits at any time.

In 2005, the Forest Ranger and I had to investigate several complaints, with one case actually going to court. It's important to remember that the fire must be completely out before leaving the area. In the interest of public safety, permits are not issued when the fire danger is determined to be "extreme" or "very high" by the Maine Forest Service, and only a limited number of permits are issued when the danger is "high." The Forest Service posts current fire hazard conditions daily on its website.

Plan your burn when vegetation is damp and the wind is calm. Burning when the ground is snow-covered, during a light drizzle, or just before precipitation occurs is ideal. Typically November-March offer the safest conditions for open burning. Be Careful What You Burn! You are responsible for the fire if it escapes and may be liable for suppression costs up to \$10,000 as well as any damages caused to other property.

When you receive a burn permit, you agree to follow a specific set of safe practices. Please review these carefully before burning:

- Burning must proceed with all necessary precautions in place to prevent the spread of fire and must not create any nuisance conditions to neighbors.
- Don't burn when wind speed exceeds 10 mph (5 mph when burning grass)
- Fires must be attended at all times by at least one adult with a garden hose or bucket of water; brush fires require two adults and hand tools such as shovels and rakes. The fire must remain in control at all times and you must have a written permit in your possession.